



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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Local Coalition Promotes Breastfeeding-Friendly Businesses

The Helena Breastfeeding Coalition, a group of health professionals that includes staff of St. Peter's Hospital and the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department, is promoting breastfeeding-friendly local businesses by issuing special decals the businesses can post on their premises.

To get the decal, a business owner must review state and national breastfeeding laws (provided by a member of the coalition) and commit to encouraging breastfeeding among customers. The coalition requests a \$5 cash donation to help cover the cost of the decal.

"The coalition is committed to increasing breastfeeding rates in Helena because of the physical, emotional, and intellectual advantages it gives babies," according to Maria Jorgenson, a WIC breastfeeding counselor with the health department and member of the coalition.

"One way to do this is to make the community more aware and accepting of the need for a mother to nourish her breastfeeding child, sometimes while out in the community," she added. "The more the public is aware of breastfeeding as the norm, the more breastfeeding there will be."

So far, 10 Helena businesses have received the breastfeeding-friendly decal. They are Bullfrog Spas, Common Market, Lasso the Moon Wonderful Toys, Montana Book and Toy Co., Nature's Topicals and Teas, No Sweat Cafe, Pipsqueak, Real Food Market and Deli, Tread Lightly, and Wingate Hotel.

Breastfeeding is a key strategy for improving the health of women and children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers breastfeed their children for at least 12 months.

Benefits to babies include:

- Decreased risk of obesity and childhood cancers, colic, asthma, allergies, and ear infections;
- Half the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS);
- Increased IQ (an average of 5 points);
- A sense of comfort and security; and
- Antibodies that help fight off bacterial and viral infections.

Benefits to mothers include:

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- Decreased risk of ovarian and uterine cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, urinary tract infections, and osteoporosis;
- Improved ability to manage stress;
- A 60 percent reduction in risk of breast cancer;
- Improved bond with baby;
- Cost savings of about \$1,000 in the first year; and
- Expenditure of 200-500 calories a day.

To learn more about the program, contact the Lewis and Clark County WIC program at 457-8912 or Maria Jorgenson at 438-6139. Or contact the coalition at helenabreastfeedingcoalition@gmail.com.

The coalition is online at <http://helenabreastfeedingcoalition.webs.com>

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